2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

ancestry. This recognition publicly announced their superior status, because not all headmen could be Administrative headmen. We do not know exactly how the Administrative headmen were appointed when the Ordinance was introduced. The observable results, however, are that no headman, *as far as I am aware*, who was of superior status in the indigenous ranking system, is not an Administrative headman to-day. Being an Administrative headman is then in itself an indicator of rank.

Rather more important than this is the right to hold initiation ceremonies. MacDonald says that these rights were held by the chief only, but it is not clear whether the word "chief" used here refers to the village headmen or the "chief of the land". Nowadays, the rights are held by village headmen as well as the chief. The right to hold initiation ceremonies is signified by the possession of a small flat basket (*tiseke*) in which the oblational flour for the ceremonies is carried. When a chief grants a *tiseke* or oblational basket to a village headman, what in fact he does is to grant him permission to approach the spirits of his ancestors. The headmen uses the basket on three occasions during the initiation ceremonies. First, before the ceremony is announced he pours a little cone of sorghum meal at the root of a special tree in or near the village. This tree is known as the *nsolo*, or the shrine-tree where all offerings to the ancestors are made. While he works the flour through his fingers to allow it to fall in a cone, he calls on his ancestral spirits and asks them to intercede on his behalf with the spirits of the chief's ancestors. He then formally requests permission to hold the initiation ceremony. This cone is left intact through the night. Should it collapse the interpretation is that the spirits are not willing that the ceremony should take place and it is postponed for some days. Offerings are made until eventually the cone, by remaining intact through the night, indicates that all is propicious for the ceremony to be conducted. The second occasion when the oblational basket is used is when the village headman or chief goes down to the grass sheds where the rites of segregation and aggregation take place. Here he pours flour over a twig and begs the safe conduct of the initiands through this physically and mystically dangerous period. Third, each individual initiand, and his or her mother, is touched on the forehead and forearm with the flour on the evening that the initiands leave for the grass sheds. During

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FTT Yao FTT

the last rite the owner of the chisimusi basket exacts a payment of threepence or so from each parent. The headman does gain financially from the initiation ceremony, but it would be wrong to imagine that this is the only reason why he should want to have the right to hold it. The competition for the rights, which are limited to a few, is part of the general political process whereby village headmen compete for privileges and advantages over their fellows.

Village headmen may hold either the boys' or the girls' initiation ceremonies, or both. Sometimes, when they hold both, they delegate the girls' ceremony to a younger brother or some other relative without referring to the chief. For example, Kawinga's clan relative and important retainer, Ngalewanga, had the rights to both initiation ceremonies, and he allowed his perpetual 'son' Isa[1] to hold the girls'. Also in Nyamisi area, Majeja, who had both initiation rights, allowed his perpetual 'son' Nantunga to have the girls' ceremony. It is generally conceded that the right to hold the boys' initiation ceremonies is more valuable than the right to hold the girls'. H. L. Duff, writing in 1906, had also noticed this when he wrote:

> The respective ceremonies seem to be considered as on a somewhat *different footing*, for the boys' *inyago* can properly be held only at the village and under the patronage of, so to say, the paramount chief of the neighbourhood, whereas the girls' initiation may take place under the auspices of an inferior headman. This distinction is still jealously observed and any breach of the chief's privileges is apt to lead to bitter dispute.[2]

The sanction the chief holds over the headmen in this respect is mystical. A village headman believes that the initiation will be a success (that is, that the initiands will be free from the harm of wild beasts and illness, or the circumcision wounds of the boys will heal quickly and well), only if the approval of the chief's ancestors is obtained. He cannot hold the initiation ceremonies, unless he has obtained the basket from the chief.

Most people still follow tribal initiation customs, but in the extremes of the area in which I worked, religious ideas are bringing about a change. In the north in Jalasi's area where Islam

[1] The first Isa was the son of Ngalewanga and this relationship is preserved by the modern incumbents of the headmanships. See Chap. V, p. 122.

[2] Duff, H. L., *Nyasaland under the Foreign Office* (London, 1906), 312.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FTT Yao FTT

neglect neither his seniority-group nor the husbands in his village,[1] that his seniority-group and his village were his garden and he must take care of the young plants in it. The husbands were the watchmen who look after the women in the village. A headman dare not take sides or be unfair, nor must he talk behind people's backs. He must take care to settle differences amicably by discussion at meetings. They advised him not to pay too much attention to his wives who may have quarrelled with his sisters and tell him that they have been insulting him. When he hears a report like that he may be unfair to his sisters and people will say that he has broken his village through listening to nonsense. This sort of instruction went on through the night.

On Friday when the beer was brewed, Mlambo and Mbelwe, both headmen and perpetual sons of Nyumbi, came to the village and told the men to build a small grass shed for the successor to sit in. This the men did, and the women were told to plaster it and clean the huts out for the strangers who would be coming to the ceremony. On Saturday morning before cockcrow, Makoka and Ncimbo got up and told the women to cook a big pot of porridge because they were taking Cimombo to bathe and when they returned they would want to find porridge ready. Makoka took some medicine called *nkolomo* in a bark container (*likungwa*) into the toilet enclosure. He put the medicine into two jars of water and told Cimombo to wash himself in it daily as he was an important headman, and it would strengthen his body.[2] After Cimombo had washed he went back into the hut where a mat was spread on the floor and on it were a dish of porridge and three dishes of relish. Makoka and Ncimbo told him to take a little porridge, dip it into one of the relishes—whichever he chose—and eat it. Cimombo did so. They did not tell him that one of the dishes contained human flesh.[3] When he tried the dish of human flesh he vomited and all the villagers cried with joy, saying that he was a good chief because he had

[1] *Mlambo jao ni akamwini wao*—the meaning and significance of this in the village context is explained on p. 183.

[2] This is a euphemism for protective medicine against sorcery.

[3] The immediate question is: Where did the human flesh come from? No informant could tell me and I am inclined to believe that one of the dishes is 'ritually' made into human flesh for this ceremony. This special ceremony was always spoken about as if it were secret, especially from White people.

[illegible]

in which the listeners assists.

[illegible]

At the completion of each sentence in the story, one of the listeners will assists, "Ee!" When he has finished his story, he says,

[illegible]

Under the intervals of a long story, one of the listeners may break in and sing some little song, such as the song of the wizards in the story of the greedy man, thus giving the storyteller a rest.

342 The house and household utensils. The Yao house does not differ greatly from the Nyanja habitation which I have already described elsewhere.[1] The accompanying figure (Pl. XIV, fig. 10) gives the circular plan of a hut with a verandah partly open and partly enclosed to form a room. The central pole of the hut is indicated, the hearth (H), the position of the sleeping mats (M), and the place where the water pots are kept (P). The 343 bed may be a bamboo platform supported by forked sticks a foot above the ground (camp-bed), or a dais of mud, over which is spread the sleeping-mat, square. (Pl. XIV, fig. 14.) Stools, chairs, are made of logs of wood with conveniently placed branches acting as legs. I have seen a symmetrically carved log with shaped legs all in one piece, which suggested by its form and by the presence of a button on the middle of the under surface that it was made in the imitation of an animal. Plank seats with peg legs are now sometimes seen. Wooden pegs are driven into the wall and serve to hang odd articles upon.

[339] The hearth is simply a shallow depression in the mud floor, around which are placed three large stones to support the cooking pots. Sometimes a canopy is built over the hearth, consisting of four upright poles supporting a platform made of reeds and grass, upon which millet and other seed grains are often stored. From this platform lipale (Nyanja, Chin.), the gourd containing the supply of salt is often hung. The seed grain tied up in little bundles is suspended from the lipale where it becomes very dry and smoked, without any ill effect to the next year's crop. (Pl. XIV, fig. 16.) Four pronged branches of trees [339] are often stuck in the ground with a string tied around the prongs, and used as holders for spoons, salt bottles, etc.; this device is called lipanda (pilonda, Chin.). (Pl. XIV, fig. 16.) 419 The smaller utensils include the porridge stirring stick mtile (Yao and Chin.) (Pl. XIV, fig. 13), several wooden spoons chikwi (chipanda or nsembwere, Chin.), (Pl. XIV, figs. 11, 12), a number of gourds of various shapes and sizes used as bottles and drinking vessels,

[1] "Notes on some tribes of British Central Africa," op. cit., p. 650-652.

and the baskets and pots. A wooden dish called *nsuo* is now occasionally, but of late years, this has been generally replaced by enameled utensils.

Around the millet bin, or simply enclosing a yard behind it, there is often a fence about five feet high. In the enclosure thus formed, many household duties are performed, such as the pounding and sifting of grain. The grain store spoken often stands in this yard with the pigeon-loft and possibly a hen-house or goat-kraal; there are sometimes found in the open space at the front of the house. If a grain store is built within the hut itself, it is then known as *ntampa*. Over the pigeon-loft will be seen a pole with prongs supporting an old pot with water for the pigeons to drink. In a tree in the bush nearby, there may stand a beehive, consisting of a bark cylinder. Similar cylinders are sometimes used as pigeon-houses.

The large pots for burning bone are usually set in the yard or on the bark veranda, together with a basket of split bamboo for carrying fowls, *akokobele* (Twi and Chin.).

Gourds. Gourds are grown in the village for use as vessels of various kinds. Different shapes serve different purposes; names are given them according to one rather than shape, though there seem to be relatives. Ladles for water or beer, *mmemã* or *ngua* (*nsuoro* or *ekiko*, Chin.) are usually long-handled gourds (Pl. XIV, figs. 7, 8, 9). Drinking vessels for beer, etc. *ekyiamã* and a specially large one, *ntimiku* are usually of the shape illustrated in Plate XIV, fig. 1; sometimes they are like fig. 4, but this shape is more commonly used for water. *Lipambu*, the type illustrated by fig. 5, is also used for drinking or for holding gruel. Oil flasks, *akisuo* (*asupa*, Chin.), are usually of the double-bulbed type (figs. 6 and 6). Salt bottles, *akikumbu* (*akipuru*, Chin.), are similar to oil flasks. Rattles, *asuja*, used at dances etc., are also made from gourds, often from those with tuberculose (fig. 3). Other uses for gourds include pipes, snuff-boxes, sauces funnels, and resonators for musical instruments.

Pottery. The art of pot-making appears to have been known to the Twi for a very considerable period. There is no history relating to its introduction among them. The art is in the hands of the Twi women. As among all Nyamboni tribes, a particular kind of clay is used and no substitute with any binding substance is made. The pots are simply moulded by hand from base to brim and, without the aid of any wheel or other device, wonderful symmetry is attained.

After drying, the pots are fired by being set on their bases on the ground and a wood fire is made round and above them. They are then sprinkled with an infusion of the *kyenyapa* or *akankō* tree, a kind of millet being used for the purpose, after which the pots are set upon a few red millet husks are thrown into them and allowed on to be instrumental. These contains, a kind of darkening of the pots, "leaves their burning out well."

No glaze of any kind is used, but they are sometimes colored red by boiling with a pigment called *nguma*, prepared from a red sediment found in sluggish streams. The preparation of *nguma* is in the hands of men and women who make a trade of it, such as a man called

Wood and Bamboo. Sometimes pots are also rubbed all over the outside or in patterns with mango, a natural graphite.

Patterns of a simple character, often of the hunting bow order, are commonly graved about the neck of the pots with the aid of a stick of bamboo. There is considerable variety in the size and shape of the pots made. As with gourds, the pot takes its name from the use to which it is put and not from the shape or size. All pots have rounded bottoms; some have a flattened base or stand-foot.

The following varieties of pots may be mentioned:

1. *Lóvoko*, large pots for beer-making. These are usually roughly made and seldom have any decoration on them; they stand about two feet high and are wide-mouthed (Pl. XV, figs. 1, 4).

2. *Lombi* (*olombi*, Chin.): water-pots. These are usually well moulded and well finished pots, full bellied, with broad base and a certain amount of neck. They are practically always decorated and often coloured. They are about twelve inches high and twelve inches across the broadest diameter (Pl. XV, figs. 2, 3, 10).

3. *Chisingo* (*olibale*, Chin.): cooking pots used for cooking the flesh portion, *epale*. These are wide, open-mouthed pots six to ten inches high, with belly and more or less straight sides (Pl. XV, figs. 5, 6, 7). This name also applies to the cooking vessel for medicinal concoctions.

4. *Chijungo* (*ingolo*, Chin.): smaller pots of the same type as 3, used for cooking beans, fish, green stuff, and the relish *mingo* (*milom*, Chin.) (Pl. XV, fig. 8).

5. *Ilóilo* (*olóilo*, Chin.): the lock water pot. The smallest pot used for bearing water to bathe the husband after sexual intercourse bears the same name. It is found among both the *Anyanja* and the *Wayao* (Pl. XV, fig. 9).

6. *Mbale* (Yao and Chin.): the plate, a shallow, wide-open vessel.

Baskets. The basket work of the Yao is all of one type and is done by the men. All baskets are made of plaited strips of bamboo, the free edges of the strips being bound between thicker pieces of the same wood forming the rim, the binding being done with the sharp edge of a scraper. They are made in various shapes and sizes. Some are rendered water-proof and used as bee-traps. The following types of basket are in use:

1. *Chisolo* (*lukaru*, Chin.): a circular, open basket, shallow and wide, six to ten inches in diameter; it is used as a food dish or to measure flour, etc. *Chilungo* (*mungwe*, Chin.), a rather larger one of the same shape, often decorated with beads is used to carry flour, while a still larger basket called *chipute* is commonly used by the women for winnowing out the chaff from the partly pounded maize (Pl. XVI, figs. 11, 12).

2. *Lulololo* and *chiputolo* (*lu* Chin., both are called *vinga*): deep baskets usually about as deep as they are broad; the bottom is approximately square, but the rim is circular. *Chiputolo* is about six inches high and six inches in diameter; *lulololo* is about a foot in all dimensions. These large baskets are used for carrying any food-stuffs in bulk, e.g. grain and pumpkins (Pl. XVI, fig. 14).

5. *Wanapei*: this large double basket was half of which the one like a scoop, is now very common among the Yao; it was copied from the Swahili *kimemela*. The body is made in the same way as the other baskets, but each half has a broad rim of wood which is stronger and profusely laid patterns (Pl. XVI, fig. 13, and Pl. XVII).

6. *Chimembi*: the bow song, a small hemispherical basket combined resinous with a sticky substance prepared from the powdered stem of the cycas tree or from the root of the opuntia plant mixed with charcoal (Pl. XVI, fig. 12).

7. *Limenguda* (Inga, Chin.): the bow strainer made in the shape of chimenga, but the strips of bamboo forming the warp and the weft are of different thicknesses, so that spaces are left for the fluid to run through (Pl. XVI, fig. 14).

Mats. In years gone by the Yao made a rough kind of plaited matting of split reeds called *chipanda*; it is not seen today. Another type of mat seldom used today is the *kidoka* (*idoka*, Chin.), made of a number of reeds of equal length bound together by several rows of interlacing string (Pl. XVI, fig. 7). Reeds are also used to make the *ngwao* (*ngwao*, Chin.) (Pl. XVI, fig. 10). When dry they are split and laminated out with the smooth surfaces all on one side. A number of reeds so laminated lying side by side are then sewed together with native string, and form a clean, smooth mat for sitting or sleeping.

Mats made of plaited strips of sun-dried palm leaf are now in common use, the art of making them, I believe, having been introduced from the coast. Large mats of this kind called *kisuki* are used in the chief's courtyard (Pl. XVI, fig. 8). Smaller ones called *mkeka*, or by the old people *mkenge*, made from the leaf of the wild date palm, are used for sleeping (Pl. XVI, fig. 6). Since the advent of the Europeans, mat making has become an important industry, and *kisuki* and *mkeka* are to be found in every European house.

A still finer kind of mat, similar in plan and stained in patterns, has lately been introduced by the Swahili. Red and black dyes are generally used; the red is either *nguwo*,[1] or a stain called *mchanda* prepared from the bark of a tree called *mundo*; the black dye is made from the root of a vine, *likwanga* (*likiwa*, Chin.), the bark bean.

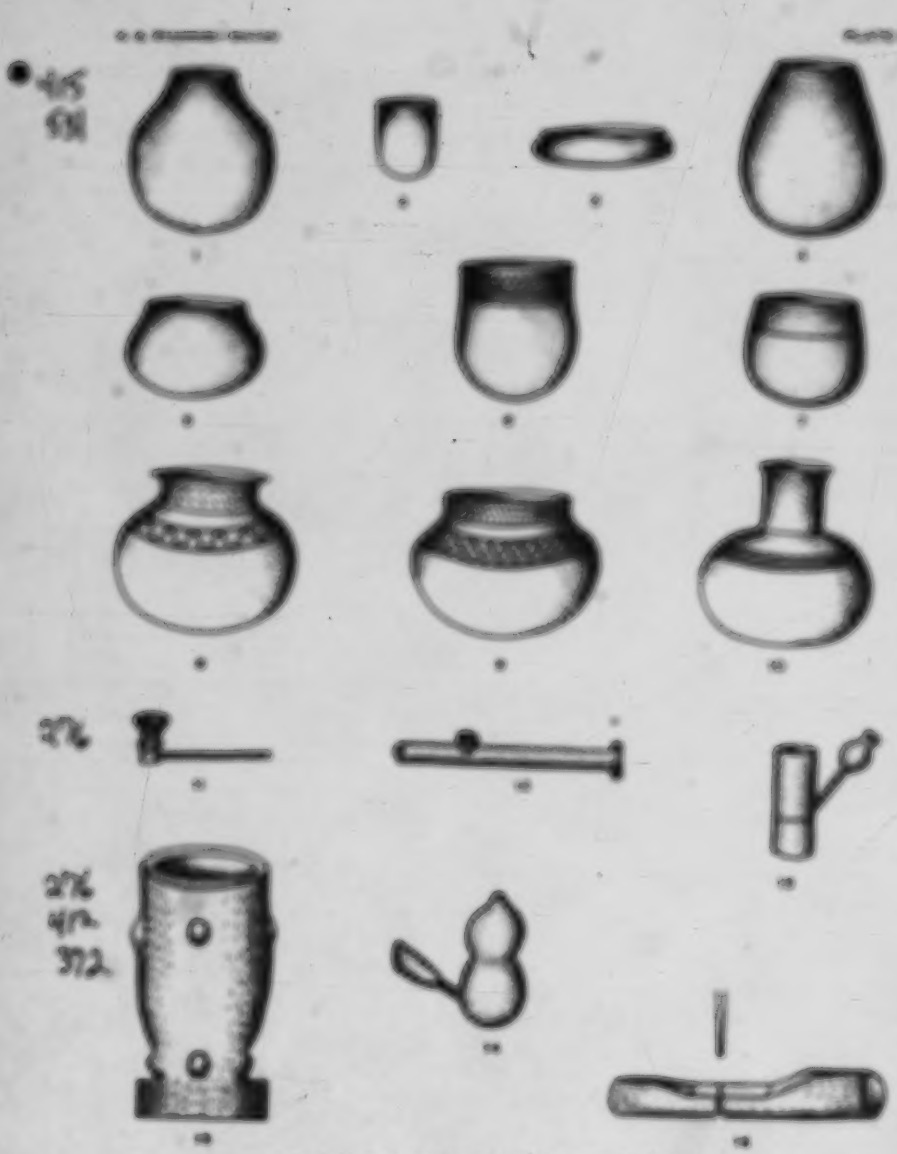
The matting made of these strips of palm leaf is in the form of a ribbon from three to six inches wide, according to the fineness of the strips. The ribbon of matting is sewed into the form of a cylinder by plaiting the edge of the ribbon together in a large spiral. This cylinder of matting is then cut down one side and laid flat, and the cut edges finished off with a plaited mat border (Pl. XVI, fig. 6). It will be seen that, owing to the way they are made, these mats are never quite rectangular. The ribbon of matting used for the circular mats is narrower still and sewed round and round in a flat spiral fashion.

Cloth. The Yao in years gone by made a woven cloth, but the art has long since died out, and I have never seen a piece of native-made cloth. I imagine, inasmuch as bark-cloth is still worn by the poorer people, that the native-made woven cloth was only worn by the few, probably the chiefs. The older cloth was undoubtedly bark-cloth, worn, as I

[1] Vide supra, p. 241.

[End Plate 3]

[End Plate 14]



[End Plate 15]

[End Plate 16]

4 Shetelowe D-0 (ca. 1909)1910 577 Tau 577
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[p. 334(B)]

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909) 1910 FT7 Yao FT7
Marawi FR4

M 535

and the feature of it was the introduction of life-size representations of animals made of bamboo and grass with men inside.

I once saw these at a *namwali* ceremony among the Awisa (q.v.).

12. *Nkula.*—Woman only present; danced on the occasion of a girl's first menstruation.

13. *Litiwa.*—Women only, on the occasion of the quickening with first child.

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14. *Njewla.*—Men and women, a quick shuffling step while standing in a circle.

15. *Sukuse.*—The body shaking (shoulders) dance of boys, they walk round in a ring, some fifty of them, the drums in the middle; when the bass drum breaks into a quicker time they all start shaking shoulders and bodies with intervals for two or three steps.

16. *Nsenje.*—Danced in a circle, men and women alternately.

17. *Nkwala.*—A big dance with *senji* rattles.

18. *Chilonde.*—Dancing boys dance.

19. *Mlewase.*—(1907) men and women; each carries a bango reed filled with pebbles—no drums.

20. *Mangenji.*—A coast dance; palm leaf bags filled with pebbles are tied on the legs.

21. *Senje.*—A *pas-de-deux*, each man with a rattle and head-dress; for a few moments they wander round each other picking up the time and tune, and then jump into a very fast step dancing and jumping into the air shaking the rattles.

22. *Chimwiziwizi.*—A *pas-seul* by a man carrying a viol and bow with anklets of small sticks.

Y M 535

23. *Mnawe.*—Danced no longer. At Mponda's village a big crowd used to dance with skins round the loins and wooden anklets: in their hands they carried live snakes which had been rendered harmless by putting medicine over their holes before digging them out. Four drums as in *chindimba* were used. The women all fled away.

Description of Plates.

PLATE XXVI.

M 789 778 534 412

1. Iron tube with human hair.
2. Tortoise-shell containing "medicine."
3. Leaf packet of "medicine."
4. Tortoise-shell.
5. Iron knife.
6. Horn containing "medicine."
7. Bead rattle.
8. Bead amulet.
9. Stuffed squirrel skin.
1–9. Contents of the bag of an *Ulo-mwa.*

PLATE XXVII.

M Y 415 787 534 276 551

1. Gourd vessel, Yao.
2. Gourd rattle, Yao.
3. Divining-gourd.
4. Gourd for mating lots.
5. Malimba.
6. Anvils.
7. Awisa.